

# **A Commission to Develop Proposals to Ensure Opportunity and Equity in our Education System**

Education is the great equalizer, the means to enable any child to realize the American dream. Children in America today, however, receive vastly unequal educational experiences and opportunities due to substantial differences in the education students receive depending on where they live. This barrier prevents too many children from realizing their potential, leading to ever more economic inequality in our society.

I sponsored The Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act to identify solutions for eliminating the inequitable distribution of resources among our schools. This legislation will institute an Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission to gather insights and public opinions about how the government can improve education. This group will be charged with holding hearings and community meetings across the country to explore this issue in depth, seeking input, and developing strategies to guarantee equity in our education system.

## **Bill Background**

Before becoming a Member of Congress I spent many decades as a teacher and principal, where I observed the inequity in the education provided by different schools within states, counties, and even within a single school district.

For example, in my Silicon Valley region, one school district spends nearly twice as much per student as a nearby, similarly sized school district. Consequently, this district has higher teacher salaries, lower student-teacher ratios, higher standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates than its neighbor. In a comparison of performance of the two school districts based on state tests, the higher spending districts lowest scoring school ranks higher than all but four of the schools in its lower spending neighboring district.

These disparities exist nationwide - our highest spending American school district spends 9.12 times more per pupil than the district with the lowest per pupil funding. Disparities exist in every state, as demonstrated from the examples in the table below:

**Ratio of Highest:Lowest  
Average Expenditure per Pupil  
Within the State \***

**California**

4.24:1

**Illinois**

3.89:1

**New York**

3.47:1

**Massachusetts**

3.31:1

**Missouri**

2.76:1

### **New Jersey**

2.76:1

### **Pennsylvania**

2.71:1

### **Virginia**

2.18:1

\* Using the latest available data for the 2004-2005 school year from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Census. Excludes the following LEAs: very small (enrollment below 200 students), special purpose LEAs, those providing only special or vocational/technical education, and individual charter schools.

Disparities like this should not exist in America, yet they continue to persist. Eliminating these

disparities will provide the means for all Americans to achieve individual success, assure the nation's economic competitiveness, and ensure Americas global leadership in the 21st century.

Every child deserves a high quality education, and with the guidance of the American people through the Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act, we will identify solutions to offer the opportunity to all students to reach their full potential.